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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (GEHRENBECK), EUR/ACE AND PRM/ENSA  
USAID FOR OFDA - ROB ANDREW AND ALEX MAHONEY  
ASTANA PLEASE PASS TO ALMATY USAID OFFICE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR YOVANOVICH DECLARES DISASTER IN OSH  
OBLAST, KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

11. SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST: AMBASSADOR MARIE YOVANOVICH DECLARES A HUMANITARIAN DISASTER IN THE OSH OBLAST LOCATED IN SOUTHERN KYRGYZ REPUBLIC FOLLOWING AN EARTHQUAKE ON DECEMBER 26, 2007, AND THREE ADDITIONAL EARTHQUAKES ON JANUARY 1, 12008. THE AMBASSADOR AND THE REGIONAL MISSION REQUEST THAT DCHA/OFDA IMMEDIATELY COMMIT USD 50,000 TO PURCHASE BUILDING SUPPLIES AND LABOR TO REPAIR SELECTED SCHOOLS THAT WERE MADE UNSAFE IN THE AFFECTED AREA. END SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUEST.

12. BACKGROUND: ON DECEMBER 26, 2007 AN EARTHQUAKE MEASURING 6.0 OCCURRED IN THE SOUTH OF KYRGYZSTAN, IN A REMOTE AREA SOME 30 KILOMETRES FROM THE CITY OF OSH, CAUSING DAMAGE TO HOUSING AND INFRASTRUCTURE. ON JANUARY 1, 2008 THREE SEPARATE EARTHQUAKES, OF WHICH THE LARGEST ONE WITH A MAGNITUDE OF 5.6 OCCURRED IN THE SAME REGION CAUSING FURTHER DAMAGE. THERE WERE NO CASUALTIES, HOWEVER DUE TO THE POOR QUALITY OF HOUSES AND OTHER BUILDINGS, MOST OF WHICH ARE DECADES OLD, THOUSANDS ARE LEFT WITHOUT PROPER SHELTER.

13. DURING A COORDINATION MEETING HELD ON 8 JANUARY, 2008, THE MINISTRY OF EMERGENCY SITUATIONS INFORMED REPRESENTATIVES OF INTERNATIONAL DONORS AND EMBASSIES THAT ASSESSMENTS IN THE AREA FOUND A TOTAL OF 968 DISPLACED FAMILIES (APPROX. 5,300 PEOPLE) THAT ARE IN NEED OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE. THEY EXPLAINED THAT ASSESSMENTS ARE STILL ONGOING, SPECIFICALLY IN SETTLEMENTS AT HIGHER ALTITUDE, AND THIS NUMBER WILL INCREASE. COMPOUNDING THE PROBLEM IS UNSEASONABLY COLD WEATHER WITH PROLONGED SUB-FREEZING TEMPERATURES AND SNOW STORMS WHICH ARE HAMPERING RELIEF EFFORTS AND ADDING TO THE SUFFERING OF DISPLACED FAMILIES. THE MINISTRY CONFIRMED THE FOLLOWING AS OF 8 JANUARY BASED ON THE ASSESSMENT OF 8561 BUILDINGS: 1) 5357 HOUSES DAMAGED, 990 HEAVILY DAMAGED, AND 4363 HOUSES IN NEED OF REPAIR; 2) 1 MEDICAL CLINIC WAS SEVERELY DAMAGED; 3) 1 SECONDARY SCHOOLS IS COMPLETELY DESTROYED, 7 SCHOOLS ARE CONSIDERED UNSAFE, AND 15 SECONDARY SCHOOLS, 1 PRIMARY SCHOOL AND 3 KINDERGARTENS REQUIRE MINOR REPAIRS.

14. THE GOVERNMENT OF KYRGYZSTAN AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION RESPONSE TO DATE: LED BY THE MINISTRY OF EMERGENCY SITUATIONS, RELIEF EFFORTS WERE IMMEDIATELY INITIATED BY THE GOVERNMENT, UNITED NATION AGENCIES, INTERNATIONAL NGOS, AND FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS, INCLUDING THE U.S. EMBASSY (WHICH PROVIDED AN INADEQUATE RESPONSE OF A FEW BALES OF USED CLOTHING). THE RESPONSE BY OTHER DONORS INCLUDED THE PROVISION OF WINTERIZED TENTS, MONEY, MEDICAL ITEMS, WINTER CLOTHING, FUEL, PORTABLE HEATERS, AND BEDDING MATERIALS.

15. IN DISCUSSIONS WITH KYRGYZ OFFICIALS IN THE MINISTRY OF EMERGENCY SITUATIONS, BOTH AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL IN BISHKEK AS WELL AS IN THE AFFECTED AREAS, THEY HAVE EXPRESSED THE NEED TO HAVE EMERGENCY REPAIRS DONE IN SCHOOLS THAT WERE MADE

UNSAFE DUE TO THE EARTHQUAKES. THE WORST CASES OF THESE SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN CLOSED INDEFINITELY UNTIL REPAIRS CAN BE MADE. THE MISSION PROPOSES TO WORK WITH U.S.-BASED NGO, MERCY CORP TO PROCURE THE BUILDING MATERIALS AND HAVE THE REPAIR WORK DONE THROUGH A LOCAL CONTRACTOR. MERCY CORP IS IMPLEMENTING A USAID PROGRAM IN THE OSH AREA AND HAS THE STAFF AND EXPERIENCE IN WORKING WITH LOCAL CONTRACTORS AND CAN GET THE REPAIRS DONE QUICKLY.

16. MISSION WILL KEEP ADDRESSEES UPDATED AS ADDITIONAL INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE.

YOVANOVITCH